

December 1, 1976

You are invited to attend the press reception Tuesday, Dec. 7th at 4 p.m. in the Faculty Club lounge, 7th floor, Hall Building, de Maisonneuve & Bishop.

CBC TRANSFERS RADIO DRAMA SCRIPTS TO CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

This Tuesday, Dec. 7th, surely marks a red letter day for Canada when CBC Radio Drama scripts, for the first time in CBC history, are allowed to leave the hallowed halls of the Corporation to be officially deposited in a special Concordia University archive, soon to be accessible to researchers.

Top CBC officials will symbolically hand over the scripts to Concordia Rector Dr. John O'Brien at 8:15 p.m. at the D.B. Clarke Theatre in the Hall Building (at de Maisonneuve & Bishop). The ceremony is followed by an appropriate talk by the well-remembered Esse W. Ljungh.

Esse W. Ljungh, one of the best known of the great CBC Radio Drama director/producers in the Golden Age of radio, will be in town that evening to talk about those exciting years when the CBC Radio Drama was our National Theatre in the 1940s and early '50s, in a public lecture: National Drama in Sound.

What normal Canadian over 30 does not remember CBC radio drama, particularly in the days before television? In those days, the CBC provided an introduction to the theatre for thousands of Canadians with Renaissance drama, the classics, as well as modern and contemporary (European and Canadian) plays.

There was no live professional theatre in Canada in the 1930s when the CBC Drama Department was born -- in the days before Stratford. The CBC was therefore the major and almost the only outlet for professional playwrights, actors and musicians for almost twenty years from the late '30s, because it had a budget, an organization and facilities, and an audience of growing sophistication.

In the early '40s and '50s, the drama series CBC Stage and the CBC Wednesday Night plays were the major entertainment for the thousands of Canadians who may now be watching "All in the Family" on television. So it is easy to see how these scripts and other records of the CBC Drama Department form an important chronicle of Canadian culture.

Vincent Tovell, Drama reviewer for Letters in Canada, pointed out in 1947 that, in that year alone, the CBC produced 112 original Canadian plays and 29 adaptations, from the classics and from contemporary American and European theatre, and he concluded that "... the Stage series has become what is in fact our only approximation to a National Theatre in Canada..."

The person who, four years ago, started to set all the wheels in motion to lead up to the memorable event Tuesday night is Dr. Howard Fink, associate professor of English at Concordia. He has criss-crossed the country searching for the scripts in attics and basements, pleading his cause with officials and janitors, saving forgotten old boxes behind furnaces from almost certain destruction in about-to-be-abandoned buildings.

Various agreements between the CBC, the Concordia University Library, and the union representing the playwrights, ACTRA, had to be signed.

With Canada Council grants and the invaluable help from Concordia library professionals and the Sir George Williams computer, Dr. Fink has now finished indexing all scripts and related documents to the end of 1961. A Bibliography, which will provide the only easy access to the material, should be ready by next summer.

The near future will also see the publication of CBC Radio Drama material. Dr. Fink is working on five volumes of carefully selected radio-plays from the early 1930s to 1961; a sixth volume will be the complete, annotated Bibliography of CBC Radio-Drama broadcasts to 1961; a final volume will contain the detailed historical and critical analysis of the whole phenomenon.

Thus, the CBC's unique and important contribution to and influence on Canadian culture will soon become available to scholars generally, not only in the field of Theatre but also Literature, Sociology, History and Canadian Studies.

As one enthusiast summed it up: "Dr. Fink ought to get the Canada Medal for what he did!"